

SCIENCE AND THE MEDIA

We are planning a conference whose primary audience is intended to be science journalists and students of science journalism. In addition, scientists will be invited to the conference. The purposes of this conference are to highlight some of the problems in the transmitting of scientific information to the public and to discuss ways in which this process can be improved. Some of the problems to be discussed are: 1)the difficulties in evaluating the validity of scientific reports and their implications; 2)the biases which affect the ways in which scientists present their findings; 3)the factors (altruistic motives, funding, ideology, etc.) which might, in some cases, induce scientists to promote their research to the public; 4)the pressures on science journalists which influence their choice of stories and how their stories are presented; 5)the difficulty for science journalists of being both educator and critical evaluator of scientific research. We hope, by this conference, to improve mutual understanding of the forces which shape both science and science reporting. This understanding could contribute to better and more balanced communication of science to the public.

Location and date: Harvard School of Public Health, April 19, 1986

Cosponsors: Science for the People; Northeastern University Technical and Professional Writing Program; The Boston Globe; Bush Fellows Program for Science Journalists, MIT; Boston Chapter of the National Writers' Union; New England Science Writers' Association.

The Program (Underlined speakers have already agreed to participate. Others are being approached or considered.)

8:00 AM Registration

9:00 AM Address: Bias in Science. Stephen Jay Gould

9:45 AM Workshops (Simultaneous in separate places)

A. The Press and Sex Roles Research. Panel: Caryl Rivers, BU School of Journalism; Jon Beckwith, Harvard Medical School; Sarah Blaffer-Hrdy, Univ. of California at Davis; Loretta McLaughlin, The Boston Globe; Julie Miller, Science News.

B. Statistics and Numbers in Science: What do they really mean? Lucy Horwitz, UMass Boston; Dick Clapp, Massachusetts Cancer Registry; Eric Lander, Harvard Univ; Richard Lewontin, Harvard Univ.; Phil Hiltz, Washington Post; Frederick Mosteller, Harvard Univ..

11:15 Address: Leon Kamin, Princeton University, A critique of studies on genetics and criminality

12:00 AM Lunch, Panel Discussion: When Does Science Become News? Jerry Lanson, Head of Science Journalism, BU; David Chandler, Boston Globe; Jay Winsten, Director, Health Policy Office, Harvard School of Public Health; Michael Filisky, New England Aquarium; Rae Goodell, Head of Science Writing Program, MIT; John David, Harvard School of Public Health; David Ansley, San Jose Mercury-News; Dorothy Nelkin, Cornell University; Paula Apsell, NOVA..

1:45 PM Workshops

A. Star Wars Research and the Media. Panel: Jonathan Schlefer, managing editor, Technology Review; Kosta Tsipis, MIT; Vera Kistiakowsky, MIT; Fred Kaplan, Boston Globe; William Broad, New York Times; and a supporter of Star Wars research.

B. The Reporting of AIDS and AIDS Research Larry Kessler, AIDS Action Committee; Vic McElheny, Director Bush Fellows, MIT; Richard Knox, Boston Globe; Judy Foreman, Boston Globe; Jerome Groopman, Harvard Medical School; Lawrence Altman, New York Times; Harold Varmus, Univ. of California Medical School, San Francisco.

3:15 PM Closing Talk: Yellow Rain and the Media. Matthew Meselson.